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Gellert . Instructions from a Father to
His Son . 1823

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INSTRUCTIONS

FROM

A FATHER TO HIS SON.

ON

ENTERING COLLEGE.

TRANSLATED FROM THE GERMAN OF

C. F. GELLERT,

PROFESSOR OF PHILOSOPHY IN THE UNIVERSITY OF
LEIPSIK.

BOSTON:

PUBLISHED BY PHELPS AND FARNHAM,

No. 5, Court Street.

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1823.

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PREFACE.

THE eminently learned and pious man, by whom this excellent letter was written, CHRISTIAN F. GELLERT, was born at Haynichen in Saxony, 4th of July, 1715, and died 13th of December, 1769. He studied at Meissen and Leipsic; and, as the circumstances of his family were narrow, he maintained himself by being a tutor in private families. At the age of 43 he was made professor of philosophy at Leipsic. A part of his course of lectures was published in German, and soon translated into French, and an English version was made of it by Mrs. DOUGLAS, of Ednam House, under the title of "Moral Lessons;" to which she prefixed a very interesting memoir of the life of the Professor.*

Besides his admired ethical compositions, he acquired universal celebrity by his poetry.

* The second edition was printed, London, 1810, in 3 volumes, 12mo.

The publication of the following letter was recommended in the assurance that it was calculated to make a salutary impression on the mind and heart of ingenuous youth; and that all considerate parents would feel pleased with having it in their power to present their children, when going either to the Academy or College, with a little book containing the most affectionate, serious and judicious advice.

No young person can read these pages without the conviction that the sentiments which they contain are dictated by parental love and solicitude; and he must also be convinced, that, if he will follow the directions which they so pathetically inculcate, he will secure to himself the sweetest satisfactions of an approving conscience, the approbation of all wise and good persons, and the honour that cometh from God.

INSTRUCTIONS

FROM

A Father to his Son.

MY DEAR SON,

I SHALL, in this letter, repeat to you those instructions in writing, which I have given you from your earliest years, or when I was already preparing you for your course of academical studies. Let it be a constant testimony of my affection for you, and a continual encouragement to you to fulfil the new career, which will bring you nearer and nearer to the end you ought to have ever in view. You enter the world as a stranger, and will lead in it a life quite new to you. The attention with which I have thus far conducted you, seconded by the cares of your worthy preceptors, has had for its object to enable you henceforward to need no other guide than yourself, and to make your first step out of your paternal mansion as beneficial to you as possible. I know the goodness of your heart, your attachment to me, your decided taste

for the sciences, the desire you feel to deserve the esteem of the well-informed and virtuously disposed. But I also know the faults of your age and temperament ; the errors into which want of experience may lead you ; the seductions to which you will be exposed, in a world where vice puts on its brightest allurements, and whose attractions are so powerful, that the most virtuous heart finds great difficulty in resisting them, unless daily armed with courage and circumspection. Listen, therefore, my son, to the voice of a father, who proposes to himself nothing less than to point out to you the path you must follow in this life to lead you to a happy eternity. The God who has entrusted you to my care, will one day call me to account for my instructions to you, and you will be also required to answer as to what use you have made of these instructions.

You are of that age which is, properly speaking, most likely to decide on the future good or evil of your life. The years you are to spend at the University are the more dangerous, as the fervour of the passions being, during that period, in full force, will not always leave your judgment sufficiently cool to allow you to follow exactly the dictates of wisdom and virtue ; and as the liberty you acquire at this time, and which has proved fatal to so many young students, leaves you in many points entirely master of your own actions.

You devote yourself to the study of the sciences, which have for their object the forming your mind and

heart, and which may enable you to promote the good of society, as well as your own. To act on this double view, is a duty imposed on you by God ; and this divine vocation, which your natural disposition inclines you to follow, should ennoble and animate your studies. Apply yourself to them, therefore, from motives superior to the desire of surpassing others in learning, of getting a worldly reputation, of obtaining an eminent station, and of finding your application rewarded by the acquisition of a brilliant fortune. You cannot study from these views, without injuring the virtues of your heart by pride and vanity, even at the very time you enrich your memory and understanding with knowledge very useful in fact, but from which you would derive but small advantage. Study then with a view to the glory of God ; that is to say, consecrate your talents to the acquisition and constant practice of wisdom and virtue, to gaining over an increasing number of partisans to its pursuit, and this from motives of obedience to God, whose gracious intentions you will thus accomplish, and be engaged in studies worthy of a Christian. Religion, as I have repeatedly told you, my dear son, does not merely consist in what is properly called worship. It is having a very poor idea of it, to confine it wholly to certain acts of devotion, and to view it merely as a tribute we occasionally pay to God. No ; it is a divine science, which has been communicated to us with the intention of ennobling the sentiments of our hearts, of establishing them in calm com-

posture, and consequently must influence the whole course of our lives. We may and ought to apply ourselves to the sciences from the same principle which leads us to the exercise of prayer, or the practice of charity and benevolence—from that great principle of performing our duty in obedience to God. He it is who imposes on us the obligation of carefully using every means of improving our different faculties for our own advantage and that of mankind in general. Let us suppose in two persons an equal capacity, an equal application, and suppose them in circumstances equally favourable to the prosecution of study; it is certain that he who devotes himself to it from so noble a motive, will go much further in the career of science than he who is only supported in it by vanity or views of interest. An application which we renew every morning from an idea of duty, of a duty to which our happiness is attached; which we sustain throughout the day by wise reflections and the precepts of more experienced persons; an application thus regulated, and zealously continued during several years, cannot but be crowned with the happiest success, and produce much more abundant and precious fruits than all the labour of the most ardent young man, who has in view nothing but vain-glory, or the prospect of gain.

He who not only studies from taste, but also from a principle of piety, will be more disposed to economize his time, more capable of resisting whatever obstacles may arise to his progress, more constant in pursuing the path he has traced out to himself, more

desirous of directing his views to the most interesting objects, and more careful to avail himself of the advice and information of those most able to instruct and direct him. As it is not with a view to shine by his learning, to make a parade of it, or to seize the first lucrative employment he can attain, that he devotes himself to science ; he will not be satisfied with superficial and ill-digested information ; he will defer making use of his acquirements till they have attained to maturity ; and whatever talents he possesses will be solely devoted to the acquisition of real solid worth, and not to what has it only in appearance. A young man of parts, and whose studies are well directed, will not long remain unknown to persons of merit, nor be in want of friends who think nobly. These friends will be to him fresh sources of advice, of encouragement in applying to his studies, and assist in procuring him valuable books not in his possession, and perhaps till then unknown to him. How great an advantage does a studious young man derive from the obliging and communicative disposition of those who are his superiors in learning and virtue !

Whoever studies not only from taste, but also from a desire to acquit himself of his duty, will find more satisfaction in study than others. How delightful a composure of mind he enjoys ! He is conscious that he labours to make that use of his faculties, his time, and his fortune, which the enlightened persons he consults point out to him as most proper. This consideration consoles him even when he does not always attain the

end he proposes to himself, or when he feels himself subject to those failings which the weakness of human nature exposes us to commit daily ; failings which we ought to know, that we may correct them, whatever may be our situation in life, or whatever struggle such a task may occasion us. Jealousy of the superior advancement of others in the world, or of their possessing a capacity which allows their minds to take in a greater variety of objects, this jealousy will rarely slide into the heart of such a young man as we are describing, or will not long disturb it. How inferior soever his talents may be, compared with those of others, he uses them as a sacred deposit committed to him by a God, who always disposes his gifts with wisdom, and who, if he has given us but one talent to improve, will only require of us in proportion to what we have received. He who faithfully employs whatever talent God has bestowed on him, is what he ought to be according to the views of the Almighty ; and his heart will not easily allow itself to be infected by the poison of envy and jealousy, on account of the prerogatives granted to others. As he will make a just estimate of his own powers, and attend to the judgment formed of him by those who have an opportunity of appreciating his capacity, he will never uselessly aspire to what is beyond his ability, but he will solely apply himself to those objects in which his natural disposition will enable him to be most successful and most useful. Every man who proposes to himself such a noble end in his studies, who warms

his heart each day by such considerations, with the desire of performing his duty, and who, without neglecting a prudent attention to human means, implores with confidence the Author of all wisdom, entreating his blessing on his undertakings, may better promise himself than any one who acts differently, that he shall obtain this blessing. That wise and good Providence, who sees at all times what is in the heart and dispositions of his creatures, will not fail to grant his aid to those who ask it, and who, he foresees, will make a good use of it.

Let then this thought, my dear son, be ever present to your mind, and constantly influence every action and circumstance of your life ; let it be indissolubly connected with the whole course of your studies, if you wish them to succeed happily, to procure true peace of mind, and to become yourself not merely learned, but wise and prudent. Be always the sincere friend of virtue ; it will make you still more the worthy friend of letters and of men. You may be learned without being pious ; but know, that he who has the most knowledge unaccompanied by virtue, is of all beings the most despicable and the most unfortunate.

Rise early, that you may devote the hour in which you are least likely to be interrupted, to the exercises of devotion, and to the perusal of the sacred writings. Consider each day as lost, which, either through carelessness, or from some improper motive, you have not begun by acts of grateful adoration and humble prayer to the Almighty, imploring his assistance with

sentiments of filial submission and gratitude. Consider each day as lost in which you have not employed your mind in pious reflections on the value of life, of religion, of a good conscience, and which you have not devoted to God in consequence of the alliance he has deigned to form with you through Jesus Christ. After having acquitted yourself of your first duties, turn your thoughts, my dear son, to your various occupations, consider on the method in which you may best pursue them, make a proper and regular distribution of your time, and perform with zeal and resolution whatever you are required to do.

Repeat frequently to yourself, "It is my duty and my happiness to be industrious, as much as laziness would be my shame and my misery. I might this day give myself up to the pleasures in which my imagination and my senses solicit me to indulge, but will employ myself according to the dictates of my reason and conscience. I have a plan to follow : I must not allow myself to deviate from it without very cogent reasons : I should fail in my duty, if I was only to pursue it occasionally."

Be cautious, my dear son, in regard to your pleasures. Your application to your studies gives you a claim to some relaxation, and recreations are never so agreeable as when we have performed our duties. Never are we cheerful with more satisfaction than after having been wisely employed in serious matters : in fact, true wisdom, far from being gloomy, is what procures us the most unclouded serenity. Enjoy the

innocent pleasures afforded you by the view of nature, by the fine arts, by friendship and society. My parental tenderness solicits you to this ; and I am no less desirous you should partake of innocent pleasures, than that you should apply assiduously to your studies. I am a man advanced in years, who remembers he has been young ; and I am fond of those young people who are in the habit of reflecting that they will not always remain so.

The choice and degree of our pleasures certainly require a continual and wise circumspection. Those fields enamelled with flowers, which we meet with in our way, offer us scenes of agreeable repose ; but we ought to stop in them merely as long as is necessary to acquire fresh strength, and pursue the end we have in view with fresh vigour. Taken in this view, pleasure itself may become a virtue, and thus you may more easily escape the secret danger with which it is attended. Fly carefully from those dreadful scenes, in which the passion of gaming rages, and in which many a well-disposed young man has lost his taste for study, ruined his fortune, and contaminated his morals. I say nothing of those houses in which, under pretence of a country excursion, young men give themselves up without shame to libertinism and intemperance. You have too just an abhorrence of these ever to expose yourself to their seductions ; and unless you were to cease entirely to be what you are, I need not warn you against this kind of dangers.

Associate easily with every body, but restrict your friendships to few ; to have a great number, is commonly a mark of having no true ones. It shows that we have neither judgment nor experience ; it proves us eager, light, and inconstant in our attachments ; and the desire of pleasing and captivating a great variety of persons, easily leads to compliances which at first are merely weaknesses, but which often degenerate into extravagancies, and frequently, alas ! too frequently, lead to vice and crimes. With a profusion of friends, could you possibly remain attached to your duties, and master of your time ? Besides, our true friend is not always he who suddenly excites our partiality. The intimacy of close connexion is necessary to bring us acquainted with his most valuable qualities. The friend who deserves this noble title, is he who shares our sorrows, who grieves when we are afflicted, and whose tears flow over those distresses he cannot alleviate. His assistance is given before we request it ; he loves us with sincerity ; and, even at the risk of displeasing us, refuses to flatter our passions. But how seldom do we meet with such a friend !

Be as much on your guard, my dear son, against every kind of intimacy with the declared infidel, as with the canting hypocrite ; and always consider that man as unworthy of your friendship, who has not sufficient virtue to be the friend of God.

Learn to take pleasure in solitude, and to find it in amusing yourself alone with music, with a useful and entertaining book, with drawing, with painting ;

or in walks and rides in the open country, in a garden, or in a wood. Keep alive your sensibility to the scenery of nature, to the pleasures of harmony ; let the beauties you discover in these objects prove to you a source of enjoyment, which, being frequently repeated, may constantly lead you to adore the Author of these wonders. Those amusements which are procured without purchase, are within the reach of every one, and are intended for all men, though so few know how to relish them, are preferable to all others, and are the most lasting.

Acquire a lively sense of the soothing satisfaction attending on having done your duty, on having chiefly had its performance in view ; let the delightful sentiment it produces in your mind serve daily to increase your attachment to piety and virtue : it is a most encouraging satisfaction, a constant source of delight to the soul.

It is a bad omen when a young man can find no pleasure except in the society of persons of his own age ; and never seeks the company of men of a mature age, and even of those still farther advanced in life. He ought to make use of the gravity of well-formed characters, to repress his fickleness and impetuosity : it is in their society that his prudence may acquire maturity, and their approbation ought to satisfy his love of glory.

Some learned men may certainly be reproached with being difficult of access to young people animated by a desire of information, and who, both on approach-

ing and on quitting them, experience the most repulsive coldness. But it is a still greater fault in a young man not to seek carefully, and with a modest caution, every allowable method of obtaining the society of persons of merit. Never be so presumptuous as not to esteem such an advantage, nor believe yourself sufficiently enlightened to despise the advice of those whose capacity authorizes them to give it. Testify your gratitude to them by demonstrations of respect, without fatiguing them with flattering compliments. Be sincere without indiscretion, and let not a foolish babble take from you the praiseworthy desire of improvement. This desire, accompanied by modesty, will always make you converse in an agreeable manner, and conceal your trifling faults from observation. If the respectable man, whose society you seek without pretending to force him into intimacy, deigns to admit you to the free use of his library, to make you share in his amusements, and invites you to his table, form yourself on his example. Do not, however, aim at being like him in every thing, and remember that the deportment which is proper in a man of his age, is not in every point becoming a young man of yours, and that he may have failings which you ought to be on your guard against imitating. Attending to these precautions, besides the advantages already enumerated, the fear of incurring the disapprobation of so worthy a patron will preserve you from many youthful errors; whilst your respect for him, and the society to which he admits you, will serve to polish your man-

ners. Whenever you feel yourself inclined to act contrary to reason, ask yourself what this respectable man would think of your conduct, and whether you should dare to acquaint him with it. Say to yourself, Should I not give him cause to be ashamed of his connexion with me, and should I dare to appear before him without shame, after having fallen into some foolish indiscretion or serious fault?

With regard to your female acquaintance, I can only give you general instructions. Watch over yourself narrowly, my dear son, and resist every inclination which you would blush to own to the friend from whom you would expect the severest censure. O my son! love is a seducing passion; and discretion must furnish us with such arms of defence as are proof against its seductions. Its voice is enchanting; but religion, which calls out to us, "*How shall I commit this great sin?*" is of divine efficacy for dispelling its enchantments. Yes, my son, my dear son, you who can constitute my felicity as long as you remain faithful to your duty, do not neglect, I beseech you, to arm your susceptible heart now, in the following, and in every period of your life, against the mischief of sensuality. Create to yourself serious occupations, and even in your hours of relaxation do not be entirely idle. Be temperate in your food, and moderate in your drink. Abstain, your father conjures you, abstain from reading those books in which vice is disguised, clothed with the charms of poetry or eloquence, and presented in the most dangerous manner,

seducing the understanding in order to corrupt the heart. Never allow your eyes to dwell on pictures describing voluptuous scenes. While they seduce the imagination, they are fatal to innocence, of which they stifle every idea. Let not your eyes gain the mastery of you in female society: subject them to your direction, and smother in its birth every illegitimate desire. Modesty imposes this law, and its office is to constrain you to its obedience. Dread the first step towards vice; it leads to an approaching fall, and terminates in the fall itself.

Examine yourself at the close of each day. As an affectionate father, I earnestly recommend to you this exact daily examination of your heart, of those dispositions which have influenced whatever you have said, thought, or done, whether during your studies, your recreations, in private, or in company. Put all these questions to yourself: What sentiments and conduct have I pursued this morning, this afternoon, and this evening? What account can I give of myself? Have I proved a friend to myself, to duty, to industry; a rational and sociable friend, a friend to religion, and faithful to God? O my son! if your attachment to God and to virtue should diminish, although each day you were to acquire more learning till you became a prodigy of science, your situation would only become each day more deplorable.

I now proceed to give you some advice concerning your studies, and the economy with which you ought to regulate your expenses.

ON THE METHOD OF STUDYING.

THE ancient authors, which you have already gone through, must still occupy you, my son, during the course of your academical studies, and you should make it a rule to read some portion of them every day, particularly those that have most merit. Dedicate one particular hour to this employment. This course of reading, regularly pursued, will qualify you to acquire a profound knowledge of the superior sciences. In the ancients we find the sources and models of history, eloquence, and poetry; and in many cases they are our instructors in philosophy. This science, as well as history, the knowledge of which is indispensable for a man of letters, cannot be learnt with more success than by a familiar acquaintance with the ancient writers; and the better you understand their language, the more pleasure and advantage you will derive from their works. The more you advance in them, the more you will be convinced, that the *chef-d'œuvres* of antiquity are not books which we ought to run over without reflection in the inferior classes, and only with a view to attain a knowledge of words. The most esteemed authors among the ancients were not only great geniuses, learned men whose knowledge was not confined to their closets; they were, besides, great men, who governed the state, commanded armies, and who had usefully improved and employed the powers of their understandings in

the most important affairs of life. I am well aware that our veneration for the ancients is exaggerated; that we extol their writings, with a view to depreciate the moderns; and that they are frequently studied with no other view than to make a vain display of the knowledge acquired in them. I know they are read from pedantry, or a kind of intemperate taste, often to the prejudice of religion, and at the risk of corrupting the purity of the heart; that some become so attached to their manner of writing, as to be disgusted with the style of the Holy Scriptures, and to esteem nothing just and beautiful, but what Homer, Plato, Xenophon, Horace, and Cicero, have said and thought. Nevertheless, we are called upon to read carefully the best writings of the ancients, proposing chiefly in so doing to enlighten our understandings by their learning, to enrich our memories by their information, and to warm our imaginations by the fire which glows in their writings: we may, however, employ ourselves less on their purely speculative philosophy, which requires a greater stretch of understanding, and furnishes less nourishment to the mind. Do not suppose, from what I say, that I am an enemy to sound philosophy: I could not be so without being an enemy to reason. I have myself given you a slight knowledge of modern philosophy; you must not neglect to engage again in a course of it, and to apply to it, provided it is not at the expense of the other sciences. It would be an error in you to suppose, that because you are thoroughly possessed of the rules and principles

of some particular system, you possess the science itself, and that you have the talent of thinking with equal justice and solidity. You can no more have a right thus to flatter yourself, than to suppose yourself endowed with the sublime talent of eloquence, because you are well instructed in its rules. You will some day have an opportunity of knowing many pretended philosophers, who have their system well arranged in their heads, and who, notwithstanding, are as poor writers, as sad orators, and as pitiful professors, as if they had not the slightest knowledge of philosophy. Accustom yourself early to reduce the principles of logic, which you comprehend, into practice, and continue this useful exercise under an enlightened master. By this means you will see that there is a great difference between the rule and its application. Employ yourself on the ideas, propositions and proofs of natural law and morals, as the easiest conceived, and of general utility. The more you learn to think and judge justly, the more qualified you will be to venture on the study of speculative philosophy and metaphysics, without being in danger of being bewildered in philosophical reveries. You certainly cannot acquire too just and precise a mode of thinking; but it might happen, that, too much taken with the mysterious subtleties of philosophy, which are so captivating to a young man's understanding, who is led away by an ardent desire of learning, you might devote yourself to it for a series of years, without acquiring a proper mode of thinking, and without being able to write any

thing but a trifling letter, a superficial dissertation, a discourse neither ingenious nor learned. Reflection and sound criticism are necessary to a just mode of thinking, together with a degree of clear precision adapted to each particular case: reading, taste, and experience, are necessary to our thinking delicately and properly on each subject which presents itself. A superficial study of philosophy tends only to confuse the mind, and to promote vain talking; but to study it profoundly, making use at the same time of our understandings, is the way to form our judgment, and teaches us to become more reserved in our decisions.

Keep a journal of what you read, transcribing into it the most beautiful passages you meet with, which you would do well to learn by heart. In general, pursue the method I directed you to follow, which is, not to engage in *many different kinds of reading at the same time*, but to read *much*; not *all sorts* of books, but the *best* in each kind, and that over and over again. In reading, observe the rule I have given you for doing it with advantage—not so much to apply to it all the powers of your memory, as those of your understanding; not to run through an author with an impatient curiosity, but to follow him step by step, attentively observing the course of his ideas, studying to comprehend his plan, to take in the whole of it carefully, to remark its developement, attending to the force of each proof, both in itself and according to the light in which the author places it; remarking each new and striking thought, the expression of each noble

and energetic sentiment; and then collect in a short extract whatever is best and most important in the book. By continuing to observe this method, my dear son, you will have read much, not, as many do, from ostentation, and merely to fill your memory, but for the improvement of your understanding and your heart, which will be by these means truly enriched. Preserve yourself from the contagion of reading nothing but journals, periodical papers, and literary gazettes. Those portable dictionaries, those abridgments of the sciences, which are now so much the fashion, characterize the frivolity of our age. I shall allow you a specific sum for the purchase of books; follow your own taste in those you buy: I only desire to reserve to myself a right of giving you my opinion concerning them. Do not decide too speedily, according to the judgment pronounced by the reviewers; neither be eager to procure every good book; but be a good economist of those leisure hours which you can devote to reading a considerable number of the best. Your object at the University must not be to read every thing, but to confine yourself to what is most essential; and while you acquire a taste for reading which may serve to influence your future life, learn to know the characters of the many excellent works, in reading which you may employ yourself after your academical studies are finished. Remember, however, that more than a mere acquaintance with books is requisite in the world, and that you may find yourself much at a loss in society, if you are not conversant

with geography, history, and what is called political economy. A scholar is required not to be ignorant of our globe. Rather restrict your perusal of works of mere ingenuity, than forget what you know of geography, and what relates to it. I should also prefer your knowing one language fewer, rather than see you lose the good hand-writing I took the pains to have you taught by the best masters, and forget the instructions I myself gave you in mathematics.

I wish you to communicate the journal of your studies to me every three months. If you continue it in the manner I taught you, it will give me pleasure to see what you read, and how you read. It will also be a great satisfaction to yourself at a certain age, and an agreeable retrospect, to see the catalogue of all the books you have formerly read, the extracts you have made from them, and the opinions you formed concerning them, some of which you will approve, while you correct others. I do not absolutely discourage you from reading some inferior works, in the hope that they will disgust you from what is so. But as to dangerous books, however delicately, however ingeniously, they may be written, you would risk too much were you to read them now, notwithstanding the good principles I know you to possess. You must not suppose, my dear son, that I wish to impede your amusement; your satisfaction is as dear to me as my own, and you know how much pleasure I take in lively, sensible books. But wit displayed in licentious writings, however exquisite, were it even the wit of a

Crebillon, appears to me fit only to be compared to a beautiful woman in a house of prostitution, and who is the more seducing in proportion as she disguises vice under the exterior of virtue and innocence.

Make use of your times of vacation in reading and in repeating the lessons of your professors. You might pass your life in their different classes, without making any considerable progress in the sciences, if you do not co-operate with them in your own instruction by the assistance of your books, by daily application and reflection. The public lessons, commonly called examinations, are very useful. Let me desire you to attend to the important advice I give you, throughout the whole course of your academical studies. Have it always present to your mind, that the particular science to which, after mature deliberation on your talents, and after consulting circumstances and judicious persons, you have devoted yourself—that science, by which you are to be conducted to some employment useful to society, ought to be the prime object of your studies. Consecrate regularly a considerable part of each day to it, and do not allow yourself to be frequently turned aside by other studies from your principal object, however thorny and difficult the path may be which leads to it. It would have sad consequences for you, if the love of the belles lettres, and of the fine arts, were to stifle your attachment to the science which is to qualify you for the performance of the duties of that situation in which you are intended to be placed. The affectation

of wit and fine talk is often a dangerous malady to many young men. He who brings to a public employment nothing but incapacity and repugnance, would have been very differently qualified for it, and have engaged in it with more success and satisfaction, if he had studied to fit himself for the performance of his duties rather than to gratify his taste. Be the more on your guard against such a dangerous abuse in the pursuit of the belles lettres, inasmuch as it is what young men are particularly inclined to fall into. They are intended to give you a taste for solid learning, not to destroy it; they ought to purify and improve your taste and your judgment, not to debase and stifle them. In a word, the true use of them is not to make you a polite but superficial scholar, but a man of solid learning, and of a character fitted to attract esteem.

ON THE REGULATION OF EXPENSES.

MY son, be a good economist. Economy is not only commendable in itself, but also from the influence it has on more essential virtues. There is no prince, however rich he may be, who may not value himself on his economy, and to whom prodigality does not attach blame. Thus, whoever does not know how to regulate his expenses, will often put himself in a situation, if not to want necessaries, at least to lose the op-

portunity, the power, the composure of mind, together with many other means of doing good ; and in many circumstances will find himself led to act contrary to the exact principles of probity. Economy is consequently a distinguished virtue, and I recommend it particularly to you, as it is not often the virtue of young people. Learn, then, to be economical even in trifles, which, taken singly, cost little, and by this means are disregarded ; but, in the long run, and taken all together, come to be a considerable sum squandered away. That economy which consists in not purchasing useless things, is, according to the opinion of a Roman consul, whose dignity placed him above kings, and whose disinterestedness secured him from the temptation of accepting the most costly presents—a *great revenue*. Many things are worth the price set upon them ; but, if neither necessity nor propriety call upon us to purchase them, it is only fashion, the reputation of an artist, the desire of whatever pleases us by its novelty, or its rarity, which induce us to procure them. All these things, my son, must be reckoned among those which you ought to deny yourself : consider yourself as too poor to purchase them, and you will have the more money to supply your real wants, your prudent conveniencies, and to spend in acts of beneficence, and in buying books. Would it not be shameful, if, to acquire some very expensive piece of furniture, merely agreeable to the sight, you reduced yourself to an incapacity of paying the expense of some necessary clothing, or of giving

assistance to some needy but worthy classmate? Though the purchase of a valuable book is a reasonable expense, it is often much more praiseworthy to dedicate the money it would cost to the relief of a person in distress. Never put it out of your power to alleviate the melancholy lot of him whom you see in want. Be on your guard against self-indulgence, so far as now and then to deny yourself some gratification, though it may be perfectly innocent, and attended with little expense, that you may gain a power over your inclinations, and keep within the proper bounds of your fortune. You must learn, by making a proper use of what belongs to me, to regulate what you will one day possess of your own with propriety. I need not warn you against those foolish dissipations which involve those who practice them in debt. I well know your prudence on this head. But mere want of attention in regard to small expenses, leads us to borrow at first with timidity; then we are often forced to become dishonourably in debt, and, in the eyes of reason and religion, we must appear in the light of plunderers. Examine your accounts each week, and every month; at the close of each month you may send them to me. Act openly with your father. Some expenses, imprudently incurred, will not hinder me from sending you the sum I have assigned you, but I shall not increase it but with my own entire free will, and according as I think proper. Make yourself worthy of my care, by the sincerity of your attachment to me, and I shall, by my

tender solicitude for your welfare, endeavour to deserve such a son. That regard to economy, which I recommend, by preserving you from gaming, drinking, and extravagance in dress, will also preserve you from the dangers and ridicule which attend them. Without a prudent economy, all your application to study would not save your reputation for regularity and good conduct from suffering: and from hence would arise much detriment even to your studies themselves. But, had you acquired the utmost degree of learning which can be attained, and were you wanting in no other kind of merit whatever, you may yet, from ignorance of economy, be incapable of managing the affairs of any public employment, and find yourself a very distressed father of a family. The propriety of our outward appearance depends on a variety of small things, which, however unimportant they may appear, call for attention and care on our part, without requiring much capacity, and still less much erudition: and this is what makes it shameful for all men who have sense enough to understand these concerns, and still more so for men of learning, to neglect making use of their understandings in points wherein even the weakest is not wanting in comprehension, and to be negligent where he cannot be so without exposing himself to indigence, to contempt, and to derision. Order is as necessary in a family, as a good articulation is in a well-framed discourse; and order is not less the fruit, than the source of economy. How many things, essential to a proper

appearance, or simply convenient, are preserved in good condition, in proportion to the careful and regular use made of them ! What we save in this manner, is the fruit of a prudent care ; and every man who thinks properly, will consider it a duty incumbent on him to attend to it. Suppose that, without wounding propriety, you can, in the space of two or three years, save the expense of a suit of clothes, and that, with what that would have cost, you procure one to an indigent friend ; are you not sensible that there would be something noble in a careful economy, which would procure you such a satisfaction ? Considering economy in this point of view, it cannot but appear to you as commendable : it is no longer a simple advice, given us by prudence for the promotion of virtue ; it is virtue itself, reduced into action. Riches are the means by which we may attain many excellent ends ; consequently, to dissipate them is worse than folly. An inconsiderate negligence, or an improper use of our fortune, serves to feed every irregular affection of the heart, from which, in reality, springs entirely the little care we take of it, whether brought on by indolence, sensuality, pride, carelessness, love of pleasure, or any other vicious disposition. This consideration makes me affirm, that want of economy is worse than folly, inasmuch as it insensibly corrupts the heart, even though it were not to bring on worldly ruin. A spendthrift can neither be an intelligent nor a virtuous man ; and the qualities of the spendthrift may exist in the disposal of the smallest, as well as the lar-

gest fortune. Accustom yourself, therefore, to the practice of economy from your youth, that you be certain of possessing this precious quality as you advance in life. An extravagant young man, who is reclaimed or reduced to poverty by melancholy experience, easily becomes avaricious in old age ; and I conjure you, my dear son, never to let avarice stain my family, any more than intemperance and prodigality ! Do not think it beneath you to have an eye to certain things which do not appear very essential, but let an attention to these make you contract a habit of regularity and good order in your most important affairs. I should prescribe these rules to you, and I should equally confine your expenses to what is proper for your station, were I even much richer than I am, and this because I love you rationally, and wish to give you such an education as reason and paternal tenderness require. It will not be a blind affection, but a submission to the laws of conscience, which will ever guide me in what I appropriate to your expenses.

So conduct yourself, my dear son, at the University, as you would wish to have done when you arrive at old age. Live so as to recollect without shame, or rather with heart-felt satisfaction, your residence at the University. I here give you my solemn and tender benediction ; and I implore the Almighty to restore you to my arms, enriched with all the treasures of learning and virtue, which may make you a useful member of society. I should see you return with indifference, were you to be restored to me less virtu-

ous, though more learned ; but if, added to great improvement in useful knowledge, you have also improved in religion and virtue, I shall receive you with transport. Were you the greatest genius of the age, without being a pious and a virtuous man, I should grievously lament having given you birth. Adieu, my beloved, my worthy son.

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